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~~SECRET SPOKE
NOFORN NOCONTRACT~~

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
SITUATION REPORT
EGYPTAIR 648 HIJACKING
AS OF 0700 24 NOVEMBER 1985

The Egyptian airliner, hijacked by unidentified Arabic-speaking gunmen on Saturday afternoon with three Americans aboard remains on the ground at Malta amid reports that seven persons are dead and an equal number are wounded. The Cairo-bound aircraft had just left Athens Saturday afternoon when the three terrorists took it over and forced it to land in Malta. The initial reports of six dead apparently stemmed from a probable firefight that occurred when the plane was hijacked. One hijacker and one Egyptian sky marshal died, and the hospital in Valetta confirms the death of a Caucasian woman. We cannot yet confirm the identities of the bodies--reportedly four--dumped on the tarmac late last night. Another passenger probably was killed at 0300 EST. The pilot said this body was underneath the plane. [REDACTED]

The American Citizens

The airline manifest indicates that there are three US citizens aboard. The only American male was slightly wounded, and allowed to go to the hospital, where he was treated and released. One American woman is wounded and in the hospital. She believes that the second American female--a civilian employee of the Air Force--is the Caucasian woman confirmed dead. An unconfirmed press report claimed the hijackers said they would begin singling out the Americans; one passenger was to be killed every hour [REDACTED]

The Hijackers

The hijackers' only demand so far has been for fuel, [REDACTED] The hijackers said last night that they wanted to fly to Sigonella, the location where US aircraft forced down the plane carrying the Achille Lauro hijackers. They have repeatedly threatened to begin executing passengers on the half hour or every hour, but there has been only one reported execution since the aircraft landed [REDACTED]

The terrorists called themselves "Egyptian revolutionaries", a name similar to that used by a group that killed an Israeli diplomat in Cairo three months ago. There is insufficient information to determine if the hijackers belong to this group. The "Egyptian Revolution" or "Egypt Liberation" also claimed it was responsible for a suicide car bomb attack in southern Lebanon last September. The Israelis believe the group was founded in 1980, has a leftist Nasserite orientation and may have ties to Syria. [REDACTED]



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[REDACTED] the PLO's Malta representative at the airport last night [REDACTED] said he had been called in. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

If the hijackers do belong to the "Egypt Revolution", their most likely target is Israel and the government of Egypt. There is a strong possibility that the hijackers may be Palestinian, in which case the motive is almost certainly retribution or revenge for the interception of the Achille Lauro hijackers. [REDACTED]

Maltese Reactions

The Maltese have been increasingly sensitive to suggestions from US officials that Malta could become a transit point or target for Libyan inspired terrorism. Maltese officials have expressed concern over US warnings that they could find themselves accused of guilt by association. [REDACTED]

Nevertheless, the Cabinet's decision to refuse the demand to refuel the probably was not reached easily. Malta has close commercial ties with Libya and [REDACTED] the governing Labor Party may be discussing financial support from Tripoli for the upcoming national election. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]